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ABSTRACT

This document reports as innovative film course sponsored by the Pilot Communities Program, an experiment in educational change, consisting of four teams of teacher-advisors, who from 1969 to 1971 have worked in selected schools in Boston (Massachusetts), Bridgeport (Connecticut), Washington (D.C.), and a coastal region in Maine. Their most recent efforts have focused on the training of teachers and teacher aides. A project of Education Development Center in Newton, Massachusetts, the Pilot Communities Program has functioned as the New England Regional Laboratory of the Office of Education. The specific project reported here involves an experimental program designed to teach junior high school students how to make films. The program was in operation at the Lincoln Junior High School, in Washington D.C. for two years, 1967-1969. It involved only small numbers of teachers and a great deal of time, energy, and money from outside organizations. Its purpose was to attempt a change in the learning climate of the school. Film-making seemed to offer a natural bridge between teachers and students, because interest in it came naturally to both groups. The students who grew up in the Cardozo neighborhood of Washington, D.C.--like students everywhere--had seen at least 10 times as many movies as the number of books they read and had spent many more hours watching TV than sitting in a classroom. They watch every program, whether they like it or not. Teachers learned by testing that the students had remarkably accurate visual memories. (Author/JM)

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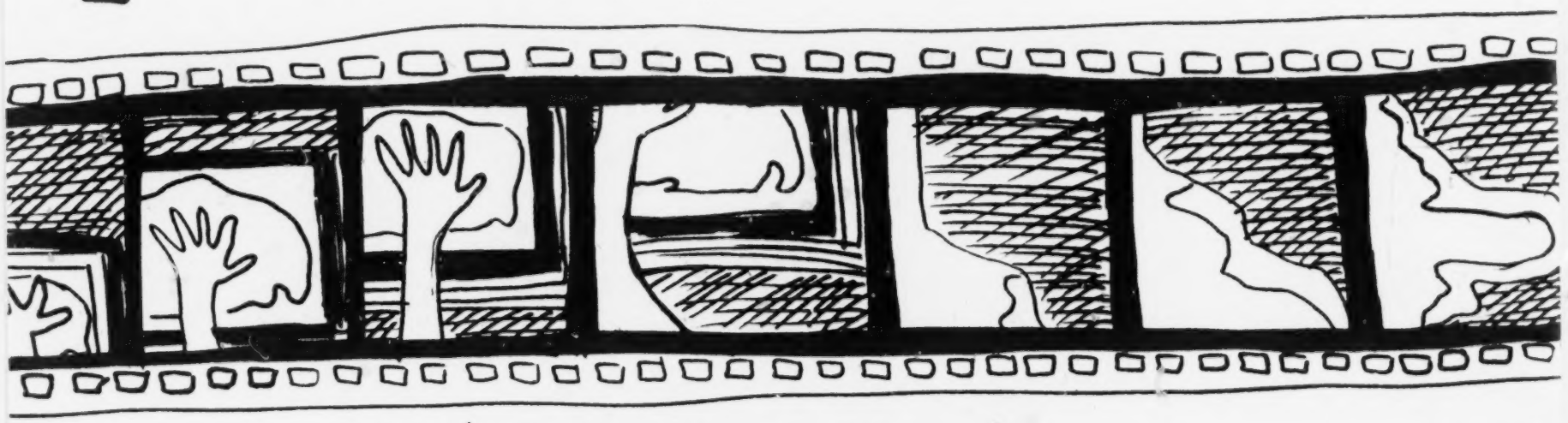

... and whatever you do, don't break the camera ...

A Study in Educational Change

By Gerrie Jantzen

Based upon A Changing Image,
a Report by Suzanne Thatcher
on the Film Program at
Lincoln Junior High School

Pilot Communities Program of
Education Development Center,
Newton, Massachusetts
1971

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About the Pilot Communities Program

The Pilot Communities Program, an experiment in educational change, consists of four teams of teacher-advisors who for the past four years (1967-71) have worked in selected schools in Boston, Massachusetts; Bridgeport, Connecticut; Washington, D.C.; and a coastal region in Maine. Their most recent efforts have focused on the training of teachers and teacher aides. A project of Education Development Center (EDC) in Newton, Massachusetts, the Pilot Communities Program has functioned as the New England regional laboratory of the U.S. Office of Education.

This booklet is one of several publications based upon Pilot Communities' field work in the four sites. Topics treated by other publications in the series include:

Education and experiences in human relations

The training and recruiting of teacher aides

Guidelines for change in the schools

Innovation teams; their function, evolution and training

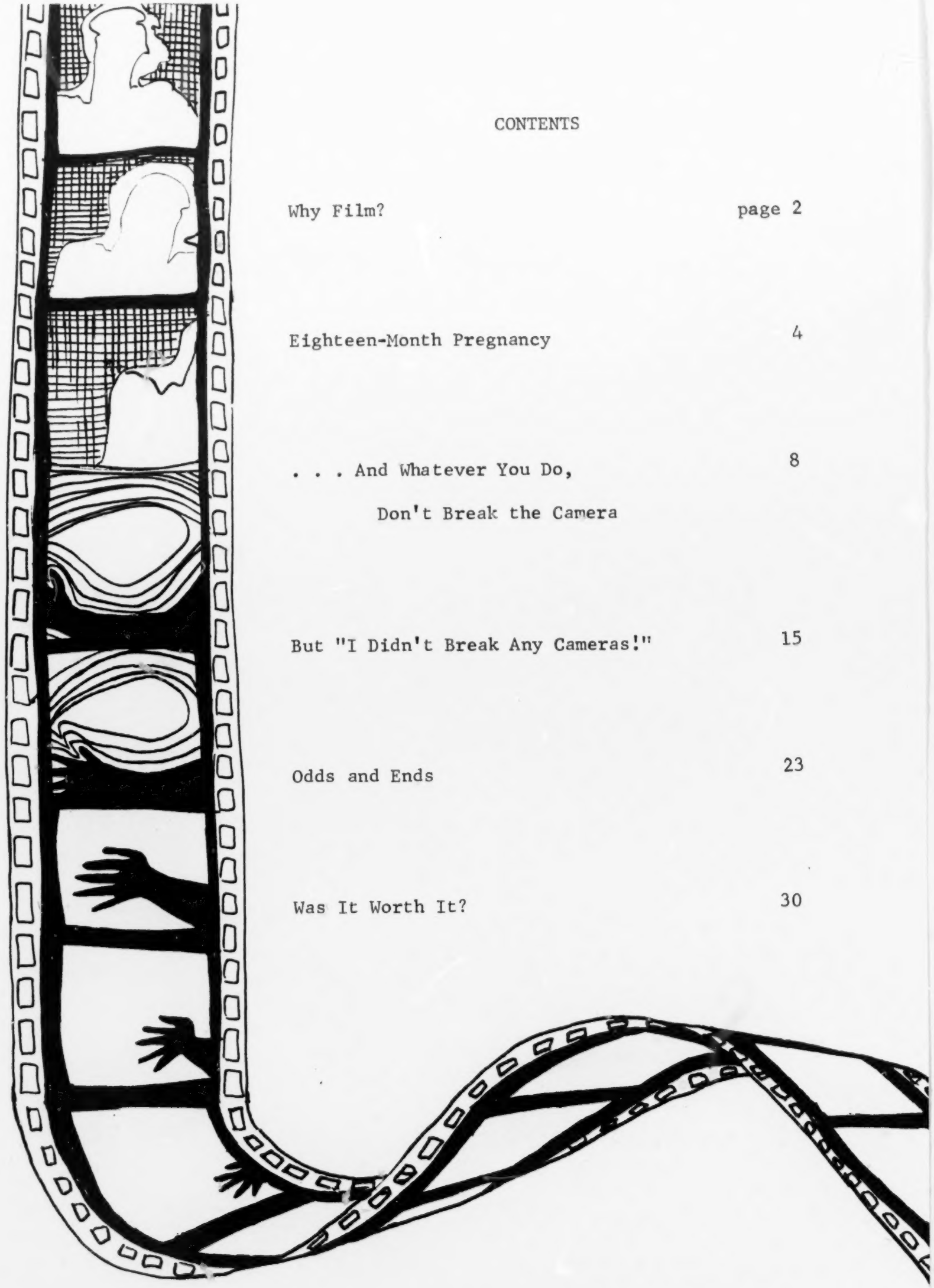
Encounter techniques for the training of teachers

FORWARD

A Changing Image, an extensive 200-page report on the film program at Lincoln Junior High School was published by the Pilot Communities Program of Education Development Center in 1970. It presented a personal account of Suzanne Thacher's work as a Pilot Communities consultant in the film program at Lincoln.

To disseminate the conclusions in Miss Thacher's report, this condensation of A Changing Image was written by Gerrie Jantzen, a free lance writer and editor and former teacher.

Both the original document and this abridged version tell what happens when new ideas and methodologies are introduced into existing public schools.



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"Mr. Brown doesn't teach! He just shows films!" That's a common complaint of many teachers who ply through piles of papers each night and dutifully prepare lesson plans.

In some cases they may have a legitimate gripe. But in the case of Mr. Brown they do not. He did not choose film as an easy way out. Quite the contrary. In the school where he works, Mr. Brown has seen his colleagues beaten, doors locked and chained shut, and hallways patrolled. He is often unsure if he is in a school or a containment institution. Sometimes he likes to think if he closes his eyes it will all go away. Unfortunately it will not. The abusiveness, the chaos, the hostility--it's all there. It's real. Real for Mr. Brown and hundreds of other teachers like him who teach in inner city schools.

That's why he chose film.

Our fictitious Mr. Brown has been involved in an experimental program designed to teach kids how to make films. The program was in operation at Lincoln Junior High School in Washington, D.C. for two years, 1967-69. It involved only small numbers of teachers and students and a great deal of time, energy, and money from outside organizations to keep it going. Possibly, people thought, this concentrated effort in film might be the way to produce dramatic changes in the learning climate of Lincoln Junior High.

There was no question that changes of a major scale were needed at Lincoln. Shuffling reluctantly through its halls every day of the school year were 1500 students--most of them black, many of them poor, the majority of them reading two or more years below grade level. Almost all the students were bored with school, and many looked forward to leaving the system and formal schooling for good at the end of their tenure at Lincoln. Their boredom was well founded. Too often, unimaginative, poorly organized teaching of routine courses forced them to become poor learners. Their own knowledge

and native learning capacities tended to be overlooked and lost in the narrowness of the curriculum and the confines of a static classroom.

why film ?

Why did planners of the Pilot Communities program think that a film-making course for one class of students could begin to make the vital difference in a school like Lincoln? First of all, they thought they knew why students tended to reject the academic thinking and knowledge of the teachers. Their rejection stemmed, they believed, from the earlier rejection by the teachers of the kind of knowledge and thinking that students brought with them into the classroom. If teachers could somewhere somehow develop a common interest with students, they might at the same time be able to work with teachers rather than defying and resisting their instructional efforts at the blackboard.

Film-making seemed to offer the natural bridge between teachers and students because interest in it came naturally to both groups. The students who grew up in the Cardozo neighborhood of Washington, D.C.--like students everywhere--had seen at least ten times as many movies as the number of books they read and had spent many more hours watching TV than sitting in a classroom. Aware of this awesome exposure to TV and movies, the Pilot Communities' staff believed that kids could relate to films and film-making far better than to books and bookmaking.

Seeing their own students on television further convinced Lincoln teachers that film could be a vital part of their students' education. During the riots that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968, Lincoln students found themselved photographed for nation-wide T.V. coverage. Increasingly new coverage and feature programs have sought to portray what life in the cities is like for black people. Again in 1969 a televised report on violence and

crime featured the neighborhood and police precints which serviced Lincoln School. Already, therefore, teachers and students were well exposed to film.

Teachers involved in the film program once tested the students to see if their exposure to TV and movies was as extensive as they assumed. They were astonished by the results. Not only were students able to make lists of TV shows as comprehensive as TV Guide, but they set about doing it in an organized way. One group listed shows by days of the week; another by type of shows. One boy listed all the cartoons; a girl listed all the soap-operas, and another girl all the comedy shows. Few programs were unfamiliar to anyone. The students watched almost anything, even programs they didn't like. From another test, teachers learned how remarkably accurate were students' visual memories. After viewing a film, they could recall many more details than the adults in the room. Even the students who chattered among themselves and didn't seem to be paying any attention to the film, could later recite what happened, down to the finest detail.

The four teachers in the course, though not quite as sensitive to film as the students, could at least match them in enthusiasm for films and film-making. They volunteered for the project less because they thought films were a good educational tool than because the idea of working with film intrigued them. Asked why they spent the extra time with film, they said: "It turned me on." Or "I just like movies." Or "It's fun." One teacher said: "I'd really like to get a full-time job in film." Others too were very much attracted to film because it seemed a possible escape from the drudgery of the classroom.

Thus, well before February, 1969, when the film-making course began, students and teachers already shared what the change agents from Pilot Communities considered an essential condition to innovation at Lincoln or anywhere--common enthusiasm for a common learning experience.

The film program at Lincoln thus grew out of an existing interest. Teachers were excited by the idea of a course in film--and there was a good chance students could be equally turned on. Besides, as one teacher said, "The old grammar books just weren't making it."

eighteen-month pregnancy

A full-fledged course in film-making, given during regular school hours, didn't happen right away. It came at the tail end of a long two-year effort in film, involving summer workshops for teachers and an extracurricular workshop for kids. Thus, the four teachers and one consultant from Pilot Communities (Suzanne Thacher), who eventually joined together to run a course in film-making, already knew something about what kids could do with film and how films were made.

The teachers had been trained through a series of after-school film making workshops conducted both by the Pilot Communities Program and by the American Film Institute (AFI) of Washington, D.C. There were also conferences with professional film-makers in which teachers previewed films and discussed the use of films in schools. Finally teachers visited schools where film was already an integral part of the curriculum.

The workshop materials developed by EDC during the first year of the program led teachers through the entire film-making process, from conception to scripting and planning. Teachers were given a sample set of materials showing each stage in the creation of a short film.

Teachers did a lot of thinking about ways to introduce films into the regular curriculum at Lincoln. They thought about developing a seventh grade course in photography and writing, an eighth grade course in film viewing and analysis, and a ninth grade course in film-making. Some of their ideas included using photographs taken by students to develop writing skills; developing a sight, sound, and sense unit on life in the city; using films about Spanish people to assist intercultural understanding and to supplement the Teaching-English-as-a-Second-Language-Program; and developing a "Heroes of Lincoln" series using student-made films depicting students or people in the Lincoln area who had distinguished themselves. Unfortunately, because of the overwhelming day-to-day pressures that beset most teachers at Lincoln, few of these ideas for film curriculum were ever developed.

Workshops conducted by the American Film Institute during the second year of the program gave teachers increased film experience as well as techniques for classroom implementation. One of the goals was to make teachers feel that film was not beyond them or the resources and conditions of their classrooms. Some of the questions discussed in these workshops included the following: What do you look for in a film? How do you respond to a film? How do the students respond? How do film techniques and an understanding of film language deepen the experience of the film? How do you talk about a moving experience? How do you structure opportunities so that students can give expressive response? What do you do in the classroom the moment the projector goes off and the lights go on?

In talking through the above questions, the AFI introduced teachers to a number of discussion techniques for classroom use. While all the techniques were good they were difficult to apply in the classroom. The problem at Lincoln was not how to develop a better, and more relevant discussion, but how to generate any discussion at all. Teachers did, however, try out the following ideas:

1) ask students what image they thought was the most powerful
2) ask students how they would react if they were playing the role
3) have students write or draw on the same theme to express their own feelings
4) turn off the camera and have students predict the ending
5) ask students to list all the things they saw to develop visual memory and recall
6) use other media based on the same theme such as books, music, and art
7) provide editing worksheets for students to suggest changes

Teachers found the last of the above techniques, the editing worksheets, the most successful simply because they maintained discipline.

The AFI also provided teachers with course outlines, descriptions of curriculum and lessons from AFI model sites where film studies were already going on, resource materials, study guides, lesson-question guides to specific films, and annotated bibliographies.

Despite the extensive training, teachers were frustrated because they still felt they lacked the technical know-how to be truly professional with films. Nevertheless, teachers did attempt to make some films on their own. In one such film, No Room at the Top for Coasters, three teachers documented the disillusionment and discouragement of a young teacher at Lincoln. The script included shots of the school's central office, where the teacher found a box overstuffed with papers, and met people who handed her forms without looking at her. She encountered fights in the halls and insults in the classroom. When a young black teacher came to Lincoln to teach English, the teachers making the film looked forward to having her play the main

character. Unfortunately, the problems this new teacher faced in her first few days at school were beyond any in the script, and by the time the scheduled shooting was to begin she had left Lincoln shaken and defeated. Much later in the year, the teachers finished the film with a 9th grade girl playing the teacher.

The fourteen teachers who at one time or another participated in the workshops and worked with films in their classes and after school represented a wide variety of professional skills, personalities and experience. Three were in social studies and three in Industrial Arts. One was an artist and seven were members of the English department. They were black and white, men and women, young and old. One was new to teaching. Another had more than twenty years of experience. From the outset, therefore, the film program cut across boundaries that ordinarily separated and isolated teachers. For the first time, Lincoln was tapping the diverse backgrounds and interests of the teachers and treating this diversity as a valuable resource.

The workshops were good; the teachers were enthusiastic; the idea of film was promising. Yet at the end of a year and a half, only very minor changes could be seen anywhere in class practices and the student-teacher relationship. To be sure screening or viewing films tended to produce some changes in teaching approaches. Teachers asked open ended questions and allowed and encouraged more diverse interpretations. Teachers developed skill in using the same film in varied ways for different instructional objectives. As teachers became more aware of feelings and overall response to film they were more likely to stay with students' negative comments. They found a variety of techniques for developing students learning from film. They eagerly agreed to observe and assist one another. This desire was a noticeable change in the behavior of teachers who were formerly critical and judgmental.

Many teachers saw a direct relationship between the style of presentation to students and their ability to learn. They also became increasingly aware of the impact of visual experience both on themselves and their students. Also students' skills in analysis and awareness of detail sharpened tremendously. Writing skills were better developed through script than through grammar books. But none of these changes seemed to go very far toward breaking down the barrier of mutual distrust that had for so long affected the interactions between teachers and students.

Perhaps film had not been given a fair trial at Lincoln. After all, its use with kids was limited to a two-week workshop on film-making after school and an occasional discussion about film techniques during a regular English class. Wouldn't it be better, teachers began to think, to really dig in and work with one class of kids on film-making in a regularly scheduled class period? You could set up the course in one large room -- the resource room would do. Bring in four teachers and the consultant from Pilot Communities and enroll only twenty students, creating a perfect student-teacher ratio. Divide the class into four working groups consisting of one teacher and five kids and supply each group with its own movie camera, films, and casette tape recorder. Schedule two meetings a week of this ideally equipped, ideally organized class -- and then perhaps one could see whether film was indeed the road toward an improved educational climate at Lincoln.

...and whatever you do, don't break the camera

Change was the ultimate goal of the course--change in the attitudes of teachers, students, and administrators alike toward learning, what it is and what it can be. To the extent that the course accomplished this, it would probably have to be termed a failure.

Teachers could learn to master new techniques at summer workshops and conferences but they still had to struggle with the rigidities of the school

system and continuing unsatisfactory conditions. The great struggle with any new idea is implementation and the film course had more than its share of problems.

The course was in trouble even before it began. The mere introduction of a new idea as innovative and controversial as a film course was nearly self-defeating. It automatically intensified conflict. Not all teachers were in favor of such a course. The physical education teachers, in particular, were distressed that English teachers were relying on films instead of grammar books. The English teachers, in turn, questioned the physical education teachers' use of strength and abusive strategies to control students. They felt that through film they could work with students in an atmosphere of trust and cooperation.

Other negative comments filtered back to the film group. When it was learned that students in the course had been shown a film on purse snatching, one outraged reaction was, "Not only are they wasting money, they are encouraging those students to steal. No student in this school needs to study how to steal a pocketbook. That's one of the few things they do well." Many saw film as inappropriate, extravagant, and irresponsible in such a critical school situation.

Another big hurdle was the lack of administrative support and the rigidity of the school system as a whole. To schedule a film course in the regular school day required some shifts in teachers' assignments and responsibilities. Mr. Peach*, the principal of the school at the time the new course was being planned, promised to make the necessary adjustments and to regard the film course as part of the official curriculum of the school. Then Mr. Peach was promoted to a new administrative post, and promptly left his job as principal. The new principal didn't arrive on the scene until after the beginning of the

* A fictitious name.

second semester when the film course was supposed to begin. Nobody knew what might happen next. The teachers were frustrated and anxious and feared that yet another plan would go down the drain. The new principal, once he finally took up his duties, referred the matter of the film course to his assistant principal who resolved the scheduling problem by taking away the film teachers' planning period. As the teachers fully understood, this move reduced the status of their course to an extra curricular activity.

The loss of the planning period was demoralizing to say the least. It forced one of the four teachers to drop out of the course before it began. The other three teachers began the course eagerly but by the end of May were coming to class late and sometimes not at all. The two teachers who lost their planning periods did not remain involved.

Lack of administrative support was a crucial problem; lack of time was less serious but no less annoying. The 50-minute period allotted for film was far too short. Reserving a room specifically for film making would have helped considerably. Much time was wasted at the beginning and end of each class period just setting up and taking down equipment.

Then there was the question of grades, a matter often discussed but never resolved. Consequently, grades were never given. This fact bitterly disappointed some students whose work in film was the best they'd ever done, and there was no reward for it.

Underlying all the problems, of course, was the general atmosphere of the school--a lack of discipline with the resulting chaos and disorder. The conditions itemized below so permeated the teacher's daily life at Lincoln, they could never be excluded from the two periods per week spent on film-making:

- No Planning. Teaching conditions and heavy class loads drained teachers' time and energy. Little energy was left for planning. Consequently, classes were erratic and haphazard, giving teachers the feeling that the whole situation was beyond them. "Even if I plan," one teacher commented, "it doesn't make any difference. I am never able to put into practice what I've planned."

- No Training. Many teachers did not have the exposure or experience with specific skills to teach either the children they encountered or their teaching assignment.

- No Time. Teachers did not have time to reflect on what they were doing, to look, analyze and think about how they might work differently. Little support was built into the system to encourage such reflection.

- Erratic Attendance. Erratic attendance, by adolescents and adults was common. There was a high degree of student absenteeism from school, as well as high incidence of selective class cutting, so students did not appear regularly at their classes. Often teachers were absent.
  The frequent change of principals meant that a principal was not regularly available in the building.

- Chaotic Atmosphere. Chaos and disorder bothered most of the teachers. Said one teacher: "I think the general tone of the building affected us. We were interrupted frequently by boisterous barbaric students coming in the door and yelling. We were constantly putting outsiders out of the class."

It was difficult for teachers to gain new perspectives on their classrooms when they lived from day to day in the turbulent atmosphere of Lincoln. Teachers were asked to break with established routines in the film class but found they had to go back to their old routines the rest of the day.

Fatigue from overwhelming workloads prevented teachers from taking a close look at what they were doing. While teachers made the surface changes the film course required, they still clung to long established ideas of what learning is and where and how it takes place. Teachers felt, for instance,

that they had to know more than their students. They were, therefore, unable to appeal to or involve a student who knew more than they did. Nor were they able to learn from student films. Many teachers resented working with students as equals. Teachers resisted not only learning from their students but from each other.

Much time and energy on the part of students and teachers alike was directed at resisting authority. While teachers demanded more authority from administrators they simultaneously rebelled against it. This demand for and reliance on authority was one of the ills the course hoped to cure, but teachers' strong reactions against lack of authority reemphasized their need to grow in this respect. A course in group dynamics aimed at team building and collaboration might have better enabled teachers and administrators to handle the many complexities of change.

In short, the film-making course, though excitingly different in design and intention from a standard academic course, was not able in itself to bridge the gap between teachers and students. This was demonstrated again and again in the conflicting student-teacher attitudes toward the process of editing; conflicting student-teacher attitudes toward choice of films; and conflicting student-teacher attitudes toward cameras and equipment.

Cameras and Equipment

How teachers and students viewed film making equipment had a great impact on the eventual success of the program. Equipment policy was determined at the outset. Students were encouraged to operate and borrow and could take equipment home at night and on weekends. Equipment was not to be locked in teachers' desks, and teachers and students were reimbursed for purchases. Teachers were asked to feel comfortable about possible damage and repairs.

Repairs, after all, were an indication of good use.

Supply requests and repairs were handled without delay as a result of the school's connection with EDC. Ordinarily requests for supplies were restricted and required submitting long order forms. The school's restricted and inflexible budget could not be responsive to small, unpredictable immediate needs. If the film project had had to rely on regular school procedures for servicing damaged equipment it could not have kept going. A projector was often detained in a repair shop for months, and worse, administrators failed to see a solution to the problem. Inability to rearrange staff procedures was once again a deterrent to change.

Surprisingly, there was little or no incident of loss or theft. In fact, students themselves anticipated potential danger to equipment and avoided its use in areas of the city where they felt it might be stolen by drug addicts.

The attitude the film course fostered toward equipment sharpened the contrast with the restrictive attitude toward equipment in the school system as a whole where there were frequent breakdowns. The Industrial Arts teacher in the course, responding to the new policy, did relax his grip on the use of equipment. Previous to this, he had always prided himself on how tightly he guarded his shop tools from damage or loss. But he came to view his film students differently and to understand the need to explore. By the end of the course he said of his students,

> I became a little irritated with their behavior at times, but they were only expressing their desire to learn, perhaps a little faster than we were teaching them and this led to experimenting on their own. Touching things, in some cases, perhaps damaging equipment in others. I've come to see this need in both film and Industrial Arts. This is one of my concessions that I've made this year. I now see that this venturing out, looking and touching equipment is part of the educational experience, part of the learning process.

Unfortunately, the other teachers didn't find it quite so easy to shed their concerns about broken cameras and projectors. A teacher's concern with equipment often determined his method and in some cases became more important than the method itself. Anxiety on the part of teachers about equipment inhibited exploration and experimentation.

Broken equipment often caused tension. At one point in the course two students reported that the camera they were using was broken. The teacher who was responsible was upset and convinced the camera was beyond repair. It was suggested that the camera be taken to a repair shop. Two weeks went by before any action was taken. It was finally discovered that the batteries were upside down!

Choice of Films.

Teachers who saw the film-making course as a way of responding to student-initiated ideas and projects found themselves in an almost impossible dilemma. For supposing the kids' ideas for films violated the rules of the school and the ethical code of the teacher. Supposing, for example, the kids proposed the making of a sex film with strip scenes and lots of passion. Supposing they wanted to film scenes showing marijuana being smoked on the streets - or in in the school washrooms. At Lincoln, these were not hypthetical possibilities. The kids in the film course were in fact, greatly excited by the thought of filming both a sex movie and a marijuana movie. Often, in such cases, teachers felt compelled to squelch the kids' excitement rather than allowing it full expression. Teachers' values and esthetic standards were often so obviously opposed to students standards and desires that students kept their ideas to themselves rather than face rejection and censorship. One student summed up a feeling all must have felt at one time: "Teachers wouldn't help me make the film I wanted to make."

Editing.

Editing was the least successful aspect of the film program. The students, who wanted their films to be long like professional movies, resisted the whole process of editing. Their films were their first artistic project and for some the first project ever completed at school. They were simply unwilling to cut anything out. The students had a great sense of wholeness or integrity of their films. They did not mix earlier with later footage. When they made a film they shot each single sequence and did not mix other footage into it when they edited it. Nor did they exchange or swap footage. They considered their films real and finished once the shooting had been completed. Editing was seen as drudgery and hard work and more like other school tasks. Shooting, on the other hand, involved action and fun.

Contrast the students' playfulness with the teachers' desire to produce a finished film. The teachers' idea of film making was to put a story on film; the kids' idea was to shoot a lot of pictures on almost anything and see what came out. Teachers were greatly frustrated and disappointed by students who simply wanted to experiment and shoot film at random. Said one teacher ruefully:

> It's the old thing getting back to work. They liked to go out and shoot but when it came to editing, they really didn't stick to it. They'd rather shoot film and then see themselves on film. I don't think they really cared about what they were going to learn.

but "I didn't break any cameras!"

The course in film-making may not have done much to alter the teacher-student relationship at Lincoln. But at least there were moments when kids were turned on by this course in a way that they'd perhaps never before experienced in a school setting. There were moments of pride and moments of exhiliration and these more than justified the experiment in flim.

The students gained pride and confidence as they mastered the use of cameras and took special pleasure in knowing more than a rival or adult. They were often surprised at what a good job they could do commenting, "I didn't know I could do such a good job with the camera," or "I've always broken every piece of equipment at home and no one lets me touch anything anymore, but I didn't break any cameras. I didn't break any equipment."

Increased confidence, a sense of mastery and pride affected the way students cared for equipment. They were eager to repair it and were trustworthy and responsible when given money to buy parts or materials.

A number of students joined the school's audio-visual crew. Being on crew gave the students a responsible role and enabled them to screen good and bad films over and over again. This in itself was a new learning experience for students who are reluctant to do anything over again, to review material or to re-read a book. In order for students to become engaged with material and gain from review they need to have the experience of actually producing it themselves.

Teachers also sought to improve the home-school relationship through film. Students took their films and projectors home so their families could see what they were doing. Often they filmed family events. Thus the young film maker gained a new prestige that often made for closer relationships with family and friends. The school also staged a film happening for parents in which teachers presented an overview of the course and involved parents in the film making process. Parents generally favored the course and were pleased that their children had become cautious and respectful of equipment and were doing well.

The use and display of equipment provided students with a new status and role outside the school. The young film maker wielded a certain prestige among peers and family which was often adroitly used to his own advantage. When

shooting on location in the city, students were accorded a "film maker's freedon." With a movie camera in hand it is acceptable to play with the absurd, to question the way things are, and to show off. Students gained a great sense of power and control in the process of arranging their own world out of what they saw and imagined.

Film encouraged students to try out different roles, as director, actor, writer, and expanded their skills in meeting the demands of different situations and people. Students came to recognize which specific functions most satisfied their talents and needs and also which strengths and talents in others best complimented their own. Those who grew and produced the most were those who most fully used the opportunity to work with many different people. Students had opportunities to both give and take orders and to work on their own, free from supervision. As a result there was little hostility and more examples of cooperation than observed in these students in other school situations.

Further it was found that students who had hang-ups in regular classes could do things they had not expected to be able to do in film. A teacher who taught math, Industrial Arts, and film to the same students said, "I had success. I had one student who really came through. I had him for two regular classes and I had him for film. Before the film course started he was kind of a messed up kid. But in film he really came around. I got to the point where I could say something to him. Film brings out a lot of good things in kids, you know."

Another teacher said that two of his kids had exhibited an extraordinary and unusual growth in self-confidence and self-assertion. "I found the development of these two with film one of the most satisfying things I experienced at Lincoln as far as growth and learning and change of students."

Students use of equipment was inventive and playful. They experimented with equipment to see what effects they could get. They tried out techniques which adults hadn't thought of such as projecting a film backwards, experimenting with polaroid cameras, filming through trip glasses to give a kaleidoscopic effect, screening films against different surfaces and at varied distances, and using two projectors at the same time comparing a professional film with their own.

Students enjoyed projecting commercials and developed a sense of "what we can get from it" for making their own films. Commercials are readily available and teachers can develop curriculum around them. Much superb film work is being done in commercials and students can learn a great deal about techniques by watching them.

Students who reached the most sophisticated levels in film making were those students who were assertive and independent. Much equipment was purchased in pawn shops and came with no operating instructions. Each time a new camera came in many students too eager to wait for adult instruction would carefully examine it, open it, look into the lens, and note the effect of each adjustment. At the beginning of the course only two or three students approached equipment in this manner. These students developed a sensitive understanding that gave them a much deeper sense of the capacity and limitations of each piece of equipment than those who relied on demonstrations and manuals. For several of the most fully productive students the camera became an extension of self. They became transfixed by using the camera as a way of looking at the world. These students would explore everything around them by holding a camera with no film in it to their eyes for one-half hour or more.

Students' enthusiastic response to the course and the relevance and satisfaction of a successful moment with a few students was one of the most valuable outcomes. Teachers said of the course:

> I think the most gratifying experience was to see the expression of the kids when their first bit of photography (the rushes) was returned from the processing, and they were eager to see themselves and their friends move about on screen.
>
> ...those were the most vivid moments - watching what happened to those kids. Specific incidents while making a film - where I saw them see things that they had not seen before or discover things about themselves that they had not seen before.
>
> Like I said before, you see a kid like Ziggie and the year is not a total loss.
>
> The opportunity for very direct contact with each kid and the opportunity to work more as a helper or an assistant than as a cop, a policeman, or task master was far and away the most desirable to me.

Films that students reported they enjoyed making the most were those that allowed them to do extraordinary things.

Such a film was "Tin Man of Soul." The following account was written by Suzanne Thacher, the Pilot Communities' consultant to the film making project.

Tin Man of Soul

Tin Man began when students were searching through magazines for materials for their collages. In Psychology Today, Manuel, while looking for weird pictures for his collage, found an Adam and Eve scene in which man, woman, and snake were silver colored as if wrapped in aluminum foil. Taking some foil left over from lighting exercises, Manuel made a mask for himself, and we talked about the possibility of making a film with the characters wrapped in foil. Manuel said he was eager to do this, and he saved the picture for his collection.

Days later, several students who had not done much filming told me that they wanted to make a real movie. Samuel, known as Ziggie Mountain, said he would like to make a monster movie. But, at this time, he had no clear ideas for a movie; he just wanted to make a real movie that told a story and be part of it.

I called Manuel over and asked him if he had thought more about the aluminum foil. He said he still wanted to try it, but didn't know exactly how. He was most interested in shooting it, to see if this idea worked on film. Ziggie, on the other hand, was most interested in playing the Tin Man and in being wrapped in aluminum foil.

That afternoon, with no real idea for plot other than that the central character would be wrapped in aluminum foil, four students and I headed for Meridian Park to do a monster movie. By the time I'd arranged for students to be out of classes and out of school, it was 1:30, so we had to get the school aide to unlock the chained doors to let us out. As we were leaving, two students tried to get in, but the aide reminded them that they could not come in, because they

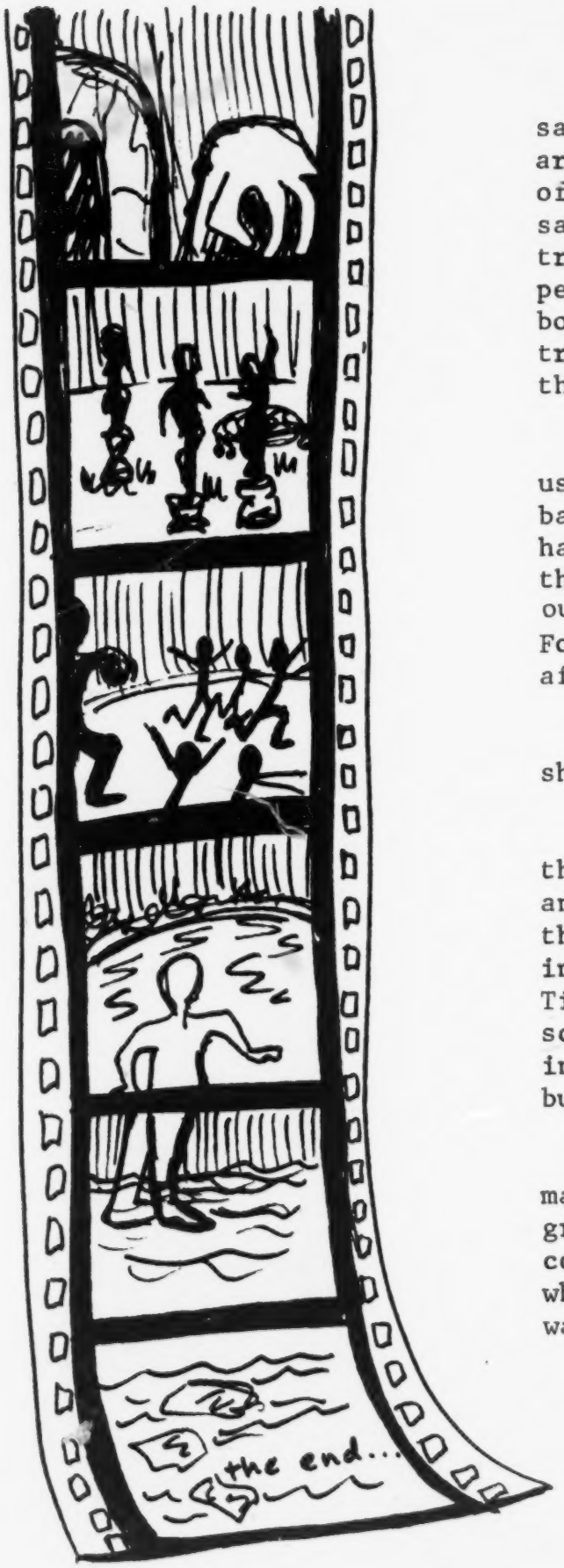
were late and had been told by a Vice Principal that they had to stay out. So these students, Saliari and Gary, came with us to shoot a film. As we walked down to Meridian Park, Saliari told us that his dog had come to school, and a teacher had told him he had to get rid of it. Saliari and Gary had then walked home with Saliari's dog but had gotten back a few minutes after the 1:20 bell. That meant that the doors were chained and they could not get in.

When we got to the park, the students wrapped the top half of Ziggie's body in aluminum foil. We were low on foil and decided that it would be too much work to keep more than the top half of Ziggie's body wrapped up. We needed more foil, scotch tape, and soft drinks since it was hot. I asked Soliari and Gary to go to the nearest store and get these items so we could get on with the filming. They were quite eager to do this.

Across from the park is a large vacant lot with the remains of a fortress-like mansion. The students decided to start the movie by having the tin man come out of the bushes high in the hills of this vacant lot and walk over and down a wall that is near the ground on one side, but looks dramatically high from the Sixteenth Street side. Because the tin foil kept falling off and Manuel insisted on using a tripod for every shot, preparations for each shot took a lot of time.

When we started to film, the tin man attracted much attention and caused traffic jam on Sixteenth Street. Cars stopped; two men took the students' photographs; and policemen and people leaving a luncheon at the Inter-American Defense Council asked with interest rather than censorship what they were doing. No one suggested that they stop. The students were pleased by the attention they were attracting and were proud of their work. At times they displayed a professional arrogance; at other times they were noticeably pleased, silly and teasing with their new effect on people.

We had been out for about two hours, and we needed the soft drinks and scotch tape badly, but Saliari and Gary had not returned. The students were saying that they wouldn't; that they had taken the money and gone. Although I'd had no contact with these students, I'd given them a ten dollar bill, a risk I had taken intuitively and unthinkingly. One boy said he knew Soliari and that "he lives around my way and no one can tell what he'll do." Manuel and Gabrial especially were giving me a hard time. Each time I looked toward the street they'd



say, "you're not looking for them to come back are you? You're not going to see them or any of that money again." A couple of the students said I was too trusting. Another said that I'd trust anyone. Gabriel didn't think I trusted people and cited a recent refusal to let him borrow the 8mm projector. Manuel saw me as trusting but thought I wasn't shrewd. He didn't think anything bad would happen.

We were talking about how and why each of us trusts and doesn't trust when Saliari came back. Gary came back a few minutes later. They had gone to the store on Columbia Road where they had been stopped by a policeman for being out of school and having so much money to spend. Fortunately, they had been able to explain and after some time and difficulty had returned.

We drank the soft drinks and did some more shooting.

We ran around the park constantly repairing the tin foil on Ziggie's body. The students saw another policeman who asked them pleasantly what they were doing. They wanted to ask him to be in the movie, but they weren't quite up to that. Tin Man explored the park, went up to the statues, scared and disposed of people and finally sank into a large pool. The last scene showed nothing but foil floating on the top.

The students got intense satisfaction from making Tin Man. Not only had they attracted a great deal of attention, but they felt they had completed a "real" movie. They had made a film which would be interesting for other people to watch.

odds and ends

What Suzanne Thacher and the young members of her film-making team experienced in producing "Tin Man of Soul" reveals what a film program, at its best, is capable of doing for kids. A film-making course probably can't make the crucial difference in a school like Lincoln; but it can make some difference. The following details about the program at Lincoln may prove helpful to those who see some value in film and wish to start a program of their own.

Class Exercise: Experimenting with Polaroids

Equipping each student with an inexpensive Polaroid had several advantages. Students were able to photograph the same subject and experiment with different lighting and different camera positions or angles and get immediate feedback on the effects of each variation. They were especially intrigued by the variety of self-portraits they could make. Students were not particularly fond of the Polaroids calling them child's play, but nevertheless, they always wanted to take them home. It was discovered that their popularity was due not to the sense of immediacy and ease of operation, but to privacy and lack of censorship. A student could take a picture without anyone else knowing what he had taken.

Class Exercise: Collages

A number of classroom activities preceded the actual making of a film. Students began by making collages using pictures collected from a variety of magazines. They were highly selective about what they chose and became involved in how different elements in the photographs went together. The associations, juxtapositions and visual humor illustrated

in the collages are evidence of highly sophisticated thinking. The collages showed a concern with racial and sexual identity, and a number were biting social commentaries.

Picture stories came next. Here again students were asked to collect pictures from magazines, but now added a brief description for each. This activity helped build an awareness of detail and developed selectivity and organizational skills.

Students progressed from picture stories and collages to a combination of the two techniques -- photo story collages of themselves. Unlike their work with the straight collage where students mixed and matched pictures easily, with their own photographs students were reluctant to mix them with either pictures of other races or the opposite sex.

In order to make a 16mm collage film students began collecting pictures on a single theme in a collage folder. To give students a start over 70 titles were pasted onto individual folders and students were free to choose either a previously selected title or to write one of their own. Sample titles included, "Soul Brothers," "Making it with Soul People," "Old People," "Girls, Girls, Girls," "Black is Beautiful," and "War and Man." Titles were selected that appealed to the students and were visually graphic. This activity appealed more to the girls who enjoyed collecting a series of pictures. The boys, on the other hand, had been more interested in the two picture collages -- in manipulating the pictures, cutting out parts and pasting them onto other pictures.

One of the few collage folder collections which was actually made into a 16mm collage film was one based on a folder entitled "War is Not Necessary." The words in the title were draped around a picture of a psychedelic nude. Pictures included in the folder were scenes of battlefields

in Vietnam; street riots, beatings by cops and student riots. In addition to this obvious bloodshed and militaristic show of force, the student included two pictures of a bull fight and a man throwing a steer. The student used several techniques which enhanced his film. In addition to putting the pictures in sequence and then taking several frames of each picture, he made several collages of various pictures. This gave the effect of a collage within a collage on the finished film. Throughout the film he flashed the original title, "War is Not Necessary," with the nude girl on the screen. At the end of the film instead of writing in his name the student photographed himself.

Other films were not as successful because for the most part students did not grasp how vital and alive a whole series of pictures could become on film. Viewing other student-made films would have helped Lincoln students gain a sense of how a series of still photographs could be transformed by making them into film.

Class Exercise: Games

The film teachers also made use of games as a classroom activity to increase visual memory. In one game students were given pieces of paper rolled like a telescope and told to look through them to find small pieces of colored paper hidden around the room. In another, students were asked to sit in a circle and close their eyes. They were then asked such questions as "What color is Dotty wearing today?" or "What color are her shoes?" A major drawback to this game was a fear students had of closing their eyes not knowing what would happen to them.*

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*A similar game which would eliminate this fear could be used. Pair students off, have them look closely at each other and then stand back to back. The players are then directed to change three things about themselves, and then turn around and figure out what three things their partner changed.

A New Visual Environment

Though Lincoln School could boast a relatively new building, there was a clear need to counter the drabness and severity of the walls, both inside and out. Bulletin boards were rarely decorated because they were quickly destroyed. No one was more keenly aware of this need for a more stimulating visual environment than the film teachers themselves. Within the film room they hung a TIME Magazine mirror which students enjoyed using, viewing themselves as "Man of the Year." In addition, the mirror was helpful for doing mime, acting, and improvisation.

Walls at Lincoln were covered by students' graffiti, and it seemed important to bring some of this desire to make written comments into the classroom. The film course tried to structure some of the graffiti around the topic of film by tacking up large sheets of paper around the room with unfinished sentences and questions such as, "Making film is like.....", or "If I was a Super 8 camera I....." A number of magic markers were left around the room so students could finish these sentences and write others underneath.

Ideas for Films

Students came to the course with numerous ideas for films. Initially these were ideas that involved large casts and dramatic events. Some of their choices included filming such things as fires, large scale floods and sporting events. But as the students gained in experience they began to set limits on what they could do. A single impression or gimmick often touched off ideas for films. Students drew ideas from other films they had seen, from each other, and from TV and magazines. They were often interested in doing take-offs or parodies of TV shows.

Editing Techniques

One drawback which discouraged students from editing was the lack of an editing room where work could be left from day to day. The viewers caused a second difficulty. Four of the five viewers were so small that only one or possibly two students could look at the screen at one time. The image was small and difficult to see. The one larger viewer was more useful because several students could cluster around it and discuss the film. In addition, the teachers themselves lacked a clear sense of what professional editing is. Neither the teachers nor the students gained the sense of excitement, control, and manipulation that satisfies the mature editor.

The following suggestions might improve the editing process:

1) Give students someone else's film to edit not their own, or anyone else's in the class.

2) Give students two copies of their film so they can cut up one and leave the other whole.

3) Give each student or small group the same film footage and see who can make the funniest or best film.

4) Develop games and simulations for each step of the editing process.

5) Provide a set of materials to finish a film, giving students footage with the beginning or ending missing.

6) Provide footage to edit for different audiences.

Equipment

Each little group or learning team had the following basic supplies:

A Super 8 mm movie camera
15 rolls Super 8 film or 3 rolls for each student
A cassette tape recorder

The following equipment was shared by the entire group:

2 16 mm projectors
2 Super 8 projectors
1 large tape recorder
4 Super 8 editors
A number of splicers
6 single source lights

With the possible exception of the projectors, the teachers felt fairly well equipped. The limited number of projectors, however, made difficult coordinating their use with borrowed film.

Selection of Films for Screening

Films screened in the course for demonstration purposes were selected not for their "educational" value or content, but rather for visual quality and how well they worked as films. Teachers found that it was necessary to be open to students' responses and not to base their selection of film totally on fixed ideas about students' needs and experiences. The issue for the teacher was not so much selecting the "right" film, as dealing with the teaching possibilities in any film.

How can a teacher anticipate the impact a film will have on adolescents? One factor that must be recognized when a film is chosen is that different people actually see the same film in different ways. An example of this disparity was illustrated in the response one teacher had to the film, Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge. The film depicts a Confederate soldier who is about to be hung by the Yankees. The image of the hanging of a Confederate soldier, his fantasies of going home to his plantation and his southern wife deeply disturbed a young black teacher.

Teachers reported that the most critical moment in a screening session was when they turned off the projector. Several felt they needed non-verbal

and innovative teaching techniques to deal with reactions before going on to talk about them. Teachers felt most comfortable dealing with students' reactions individually, but there was a woeful lack of strategies for dealing with powerful reactions in the more crowded classrooms. Sometimes teachers found it helpful simply to acknowledge a student's response: "Gregory, I saw you were sad when...." Beyond that teachers were totally dependent on their natural sensitivity.

With Washington's rich film resources, obtaining film for the course was never a problem. The capitol boasts excellent private and public film collections and attracts many people with special skills and talents including the production crews of the news media. Unfortunately, these resources have little impact on the city's schools. Teachers in the film course made heavy use of the D.C. Public Library as well as suburban libraries and private collections. Teachers found the public librarians cooperative and willing to discuss teachers' problems in connection with the library. A number of improvements in the D.C. film library resulted.

Teachers also made use of public relations films distributed for free by large businesses. Many teachers are skeptical of these films because of their source. Indeed, many are purely propagandistic and just plain tedious. On the other hand, there are some excellent films made by large companies that use the latest film techniques.

was it worth it?

What's the point of launching a film program like the one at Lincoln? None at all if the goal is to radically alter the learning climate of a school. But in terms of the individual child, something could happen. There could be another Ziggie, for example, who never knew success in school before he directed the shooting of a horror movie.

Something did happen at Lincoln if only to a few students and one or two teachers. What happened can perhaps best be seen in the face of a once sullen, angry, hostile youth who now exhibits a glimmer of hope, an expression of interest and a determination to accomplish something through film. Gone from his hand is the old grammar book. Gone too, the bored look. In their place -- just a camera, a wad of film, and the excitement generated by a whole new world.